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New York

President:	Mrs. Ogwu	(Nigeria)
Members:	Austria	Ms. Kaudel
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Marinčić
	Brazil	Mr. Moretti
	China	Mr. Zhang Changwei
	France	Mr. Kassianides
	Gabon	Mrs. Ntyam-Ehya
	Japan	Mr. Arima
	Lebanon	Mr. Khachab
	Mexico	Ms. Posada Otero
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Turkey	Mr. Dizdar
	Uganda	Mrs. Kafeero
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Scott
	United States of America	Mr. Grant

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting resumed at 3.10 p.m.

The President: I would like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Ecuador and Iceland, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour to address the Security Council at this important meeting under the presidency of friendly Nigeria. I would like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, the Under-Secretary-General, for his important briefing to us this morning.

My delegation thanks you, Madam President, for convening this open debate, which comes at a very critical and dangerous time for the Middle East, when opportunities for peace and stability are receding and opportunities for threats, war and aggression are on the rise. All of this is a result of Israel's feverish race against time in its efforts to erode all that remains of the hopes of resuming the peace process. Israel continues to work for the Judaization of Jerusalem, to build a racist separation wall on occupied Palestinian territory, to intensify settlement activity there, to occupy the Syrian Golan and to blockade Gaza. It has attacked the freedom flotilla ships and murdered the international peace activists they carried, in flagrant defiance of the international community and in violation of international law and the basic values and principles of humanity and civilization.

This meeting is being held in the sixth year since the International Court of Justice adopted its advisory opinion confirming the illegitimacy of the separation wall, and long decades since Israel first occupied Arab territory. That is indeed the crux and the fundamental reason for the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is by its nature a provocative, unjust offence whereby Israel has violated all relevant rules and international resolutions and committed every kind of war crime against the Palestinian people: killing women and children; violating the sanctity of places of worship; inflicting collective punishment; closing border crossings; detaining tens of thousands of civilians and democratically elected Palestinian officials; and pursuing a racist, expansionist occupation accompanied by cancerous, declared and undeclared settlements in the occupied Arab territories, especially Jerusalem, in a manner that targets the very existence of that city and its Islamic and Christian character.

Such settlements have devoured around 42 per cent of the lands of the West Bank, according to reports by the Israeli organization B'Tselem, in clear violation of international law. We should recall that Israel continued to pursue these policies until a few days ago. After the meeting between President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Israel announced the construction of 32 new settlement units in East Jerusalem.

Syria, along with other Arab countries, has worked, through the adoption of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, to achieve peace and all that peace entails: the restoration of all Arab rights, including Israel's total withdrawal from all occupied territories to the line of 4 June 1967, and the settlement of Palestinian refugees as set forth in General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

The Israelis' rejection of this is clear; they disdain all such decisions. Committing crimes against the Palestinian people is not enough; their crimes have extended to peace activists of other nationalities who tried to deliver humanitarian assistance to Gaza on the freedom flotilla. Israel's terrorist aggression killed nine civilians whose only crime was to try to help the people under blockade and whose suffering could not be alleviated by all the resolutions and decisions adopted by the international community.

That was Israel's true response to the proposals for peace in the Middle East, a response that we have

sought to remind the world of throughout the decades since Israel first occupied our lands. Israel defies not only international law, but its own bilateral relations with important countries within and outside the region, in a manner that threatens the region's stability and embarrasses its closest allies.

Around two months ago, this Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2010/9) in which it called for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards; for the immediate release of the convoy ships; and for the delivery of their humanitarian assistance to besieged Gaza. Today more than ever, the Security Council must move beyond the mere condemnation of such acts; it should translate its resolutions into practical steps commensurate with Israel's terrible actions, so that they do not meet the fate of other, previous resolutions on Israel that remain dead letters.

I would like to note here that Mr. John Ging, the Director of Operations in Gaza of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), stated today that all Israeli claims to have reduced the effects of the blockade and allowed the entry of some basic goods into Gaza are totally incorrect. We also recall that the General Assembly has approved the recommendations of the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48), which included conclusive evidence concerning Israel's violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international humanitarian law during its aggression against Gaza. Such violations are tantamount to war crimes and perhaps even to crimes against humanity. Every United Nations body has called for the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Thus, we call today on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility to hold Israel's officials responsible for their acts and to punish them for their crimes in Gaza. We also call on the Council to press for the immediate lifting of the unjust blockade imposed on the Palestinian people in Gaza, to open all crossings, and to begin to reconstruct Gaza, which was destroyed by Israel's aggression.

After 43 years of Israel's unjust occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights — and despite all the resolutions concerning its international illegitimacy, including resolution 497 (1981), and the call by a majority of the countries of the world to put an end to that occupation, as well as their condemnation of Israel's oppressive practices and violation of so many laws and resolutions — Israel still refuses to accept these appeals or to implement any resolutions. On the contrary, after occupying the Syrian Golan, Israel declared its annexation, in clear violation of the principles of international law and its obligations under the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Since that occupation, Israel has employed every possible means to attempt to expel the citizens of the area, impose colonizing settlements on them and import foreign settlers, preferring them over the indigenous people of the Golan, whom they have incarcerated in detention.

Recent Israeli military exercises in the Golan Heights have destroyed 5,000 dunums of fertile land. On 12 July, Israeli forces used force to enter the home of a Syrian citizen in the village of Mejdel Shams. When villagers attempted to face them, some 25 persons, including women and children, were hurt as a result of the tear gas munitions used by the Israeli forces, and some were hit by rubber bullets. Mr. Lynn Pascoe referred to this incident today.

My country's Minister for Foreign Affairs, in identical letters dated 4 January 2010 addressed to the President of the Security Council and to the Secretary-General (S/2010/4, annex), referred to Israeli violations in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, where Israel is planning to Judaize and control even more Syrian territory in the Golan, in steps that send a provocative message to Syria and other States that are seeking peace in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. And, yet, in flagrant defiance of the will of the international community, the Israeli Knesset, just a few days ago, on 9 July, adopted, after a first reading, a resolution stating that any agreement on withdrawal from East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights should be subject to a referendum requiring the support of 80 per cent of Israelis. This decision is in clear defiance of the entire world and a rejection of peace. All that has been said by Israeli Government representatives is just manoeuvring and manipulation: there is no real Israeli partner for peace. The clear reality, as His Excellency President Bashar Al-Assad has said, is that peace has never been an obsession of Israel; Israel's obsession has always been its own security, in the narrowest sense. This can be realized only at our cost in terms of peace and rights.

It is illogical and unacceptable that we, the Arabs, should be required to continue proving our sincere desire for peace, even though we have declared it

repeatedly, especially since the Madrid Conference in 1991. It is for the Israelis to prove that they want peace and to manifest in a pragmatic and realistic way that they are seeking peace and justice. They have to try to convince us, the Arabs, that they want peace. It is they who occupy our land. It is they who attack our people. It is they who displace millions of our people. It is not the other way around. It is they who commit all of these actions, and yet they call for protection and guarantees, resorting to false pretexts to engage in blackmail and gain further concessions.

The representative of Israel referred to the alleged smuggling of arms to the Lebanese resistance. She forgets that Israel has been mentioned hundreds of times in United Nations reports — reports of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and reports by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Lebanon. All of these reports mention, hundreds of times, that it is Israel that violates resolution 1701 (2006) and violates the sovereignty of Lebanon around the clock. She forgets that Israel is the most heavily armed of the parties, with conventional as well as nuclear weapons: Israel is armed to the teeth. Since 1950, certain countries have assured Israel of its military superiority over all its Arab neighbours combined. She is also oblivious to the fact that Israel uses that military arsenal to perpetuate its occupation of our land, to continue committing its acts of aggression and to commit acts of piracy against the activists of the peace flotilla. Indeed, Israel deploys submarines capable of carrying weapons to the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, and issues threats of war every day. It violates international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations all at once on a daily basis. Israel is known to be one of the largest importers of weapons in the world. It is also the world's fourth largest weapons exporter.

The problem with Israel's representative here and its policymakers and decision-makers is that they have not yet understood that occupation is one of the worst crimes of aggression, as defined in General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX). They have not yet grasped that they have exhausted this Organization after hours — years — of meetings on how to bring their occupation of our land to an end.

One solution could be for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to organize a conference or special training session for the representative of Israel and Israeli decision-makers to help them understand the definition of aggression as stipulated in the Charter and in United Nations resolutions. The lecturers should, preferably, be the special rapporteurs on human rights and those who have chaired the many inspection teams and fact-finding missions formed since 1948 to investigate the repeated crimes of Israel. It would do them no harm to recall the spirit of Count Bernadotte and to attend such a training session.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): My delegation should like to thank you, Madam President, for having convened this important and timely debate. I also congratulate you on your able stewardship of the Security Council this month. Undoubtedly, today's debate is a welcome opportunity to underscore once again the importance of finding a solution to the situation in the Middle East and, in particular, the question of Palestine.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I also take this opportunity to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing this morning.

Today's debate takes place against the backdrop of the tragic events of 31 May 2010, when Israeli forces attacked a humanitarian aid flotilla headed for Gaza, demonstrating Israel's contempt for international law, and therefore deserving condemnation in the strongest possible terms. The Israeli military assault on the aid flotilla clearly has a negative impact on the search for a lasting solution to the challenges confronting the region and results from the continued illegal blockade of the Gaza strip.

In reaction to this incident, we recalled our Ambassador to Israel for consultation and also summoned the Israeli Ambassador to South Africa to register the South African Government's strongest protest at the Israeli Government's attack on the flotilla.

The South African Government therefore calls for the blockade of Gaza to be immediately lifted. This blockade, which has brought untold hardships to the

ordinary people of Gaza, has subjected Palestinians to subhuman conditions and is both unconscionable and unsustainable. South Africa, while noting Israel's recent steps towards a shift in policy on Gaza, unequivocally supports the Secretary-General's call for an end to the blockade so that humanitarian assistance, commercial goods and persons can flow through functioning land crossings. The continuance of this blockade deprives ordinary Palestinians of their rights to cross-border trade and movement, limiting the extent to which they can exercise their social and economic rights and inflicting untold suffering and collective punishment on the citizens of Gaza. The illegal blockade of Gaza further serves to seriously undermine the creation of an economically viable Palestinian State.

My delegation has always stated that a long-term solution to the challenges facing the region can be achieved only through negotiations. For this to happen, it is essential that a climate of mutual trust and peace be created. South Africa notes that the internal committee set up by the Israeli Government to probe the Israeli attack has concluded its investigations. Although it admits that mistakes were made by the Israeli military, no further action was recommended. However, South Africa reiterates its call for any investigation to be prompt, impartial, credible and transparent, in line with the United Nations recommendations, and, as this action had international ramifications, to be conducted by independent international investigators. South Africa therefore strongly supports the proposal of the Secretary-General for an international investigation that would involve an independent panel and include representatives from Israel and Turkey to investigate this incident.

The international community cannot allow such serious violations of international law to go unpunished, which would only serve as a license for further acts of impunity on the part of Israel. In this regard, the Security Council must ensure that Israel upholds its legal obligations under international law. Such actions on the part of Israel, in our view, would build the trust necessary for taking negotiations towards a permanent solution.

My delegation notes with concern that, despite Israel's restraint policy, settlement construction continues in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We therefore reiterate our call on Israel to immediately cease the building and expansion of settlements and the continued demolition of Palestinian houses in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which constitute a violation of international law, relevant Security Council resolutions and Israel's obligations under the Road Map.

My delegation remains convinced that the only viable solution to the challenges confronting the region is a political solution based on the creation of a permanent State of Palestine and Israel coexisting peaceably side by side on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the implementation of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as the Quartet Road Map.

In this connection, my delegation is of the view that the proximity talks between the parties should result in credible negotiations with the objective of finding a lasting solution to all permanent status issues. The search for a lasting solution will require demonstrable action on the part of all parties, and Israel in particular as the occupier, in taking the process forward and to achieve a lasting peace and security in the region. Current Israeli action does little to build confidence and has ironically served to further frustrate attempts at achieving meaningful negotiations.

My delegation is deeply concerned over Israel's ongoing violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and calls for the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). My delegation also calls on Israel to implement resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) with regard to the Syrian Golan Heights. Only through a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East that also addresses the Syrian and Lebanese tracks will a durable and just peace in the region be achieved.

In conclusion, South Africa, as a product of the solidarity of the international community, believes that the international community owes it to the Palestinian people to deliver them from the illegal Israeli occupation. The resolution of this issue by and large remains a question of political will. It will warrant difficult decisions to be made and implemented, particularly on the part of the Security Council. And if the Security Council is to meet its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security, its members must be prepared to take those difficult decisions and, more important, to implement them. It

can no longer be business as usual when generation after generation of Palestinians are being denied peace, stability, freedom and respect for their human dignity. This body must carry out its Charter obligations on the maintenance of international peace and security and decisively deal with this issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Shawabkah (Jordan) *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, Madam President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

Once again, the Council is meeting to take up the conflict in the Middle East and Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian territories and of Arab territories in the Syrian Golan and South Lebanon. The Council is meeting at a time of intensive United States efforts, with major international support, to create an environment conducive to the relaunching of direct negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel in order to achieve the two-State solution through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital, coexisting in peace and security with the State of Israel and all other States of the region. We in Jordan support these efforts and call on Israel to respond positively to them by resuming direct negotiations as soon as possible from the point at which the previous negotiations stopped, and to address all final status questions, including Jerusalem, refugees, security and borders.

Such negotiations must be clearly time-bound and subject to strict criteria to monitor the fulfillment of obligations. All parties must evince their seriousness by matching actions with words. Any demonstration of a commitment to peace ipso facto requires a halt to all unilateral Israel actions in the occupied West Bank — the heart of which is East Jerusalem — including forced migration, deportation, the seizure of property and land, and the policy of demolishing the homes of Christian and Muslim Palestinians and evicting them. There also must be an immediate stop to all excavations and tunnels beneath and around the Christian and Islamic holy sites.

Needless to say, such actions, over and above being illegal and illegitimate, violate the norms of international law and international humanitarian law and constitute a flagrant breach by Israel of its obligations as the occupying Power and of scores of resolutions of this Council and hundreds of resolutions of the General Assembly. These actions also hinder the United States and international efforts.

The two-State solution is the only solution to the question of Palestine, which is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Attainment of such a solution and of comprehensive peace in the Middle East in accordance with established international terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative is of vital interest not only to the nations and peoples of our region but to the entire world. It also commands international unanimity.

Similarly, the Arab Peace Initiative — adopted in 2002 by the Council of the League of Arab States at the Beirut Summit and reaffirmed in all subsequent Arab summits, most recent of which was the Sirte summit, held last March, and also endorsed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) at the summit level and the ministerial level — reflects the depth of the Islamic and Arab commitment to an even-handed, comprehensive, permanent and just peace. Regrettably, that important initiative has not been received with commensurate acceptance or positive reaction by successive Israeli Governments. It is high time for Israel to respond positively to this balanced, committed and significant initiative, which would create a win-win situation for all parties.

That is because Israel's acceptance of the Arab Peace Initiative would guarantee the end of its occupation of all Syrian territories occupied since 1967 and the remaining Lebanese territories occupied in the same year and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and because it would guarantee an agreed resolution of the issue of Palestine refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and would secure for Israel peace agreements with all Arab States and normal relations with 35 other Islamic States. Moreover, Israel's acceptance and implementation of the Initiative would put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and guarantee the security of all States and peoples of the region, including Israel. It would integrate Israel into the region, replacing its recourse to a citadel mentality, which does not bring about security, stability, peace, good-neighbourliness or cooperation.

Hence, we affirm and underscore the importance of a holistic solution and of seeking as soon as possible

to resume negotiations on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks from the point at which the previous negotiations stopped, within a frame of reference based on the established peace process terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Allow me on behalf of my country to emphasize the severity and gravity of the scope and implications of the absence of peace and security in the Middle East. When His Hashemite Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein consistently affirms the centrality of the question of Palestine and its priority and precedence over all other questions in the region, he is proceeding from the firm conviction that the two-State solution and the peace process constitute the only approach that will enable us to effectively and efficiently address the region's other challenges and problems, including the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and manifestations of intolerance, extremism, terrorism and violence.

In view of the uninterrupted historic role assumed by His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein and Jordan as custodian of sacred Christian and Islamic holy sites, I would like to acquaint the Council with the gravity of Israeli actions in Al-Quds, which are intended to create new realities on the ground and to eradicate religious monuments, in particular Christian and Islamic sites. This constitutes a flagrant breach of international humanitarian law, which obliges the occupying Power to preserve cultural, historic and religious sites and not to undermine or demolish them. The Council realizes that Israel's continuation of such actions offends the feelings of hundreds of millions of Christians and Muslims, not only in the region but all over the world. Therein lies the real threat to the international peace and security provided for in the United Nations Charter.

The notable economic and security achievements of the Palestinian Government in the Palestinian territories are threatened by Israel's continued policy of isolation, roadblocks, separation walls and closure. Hence, this policy and these practices must be stopped, and the Israeli blockade of Gaza must be ended immediately.

Moreover, until the full and prompt lifting of its blockade in accordance with its legal obligations and in support of lofty humanitarian values, Israel must deal positively with international attempts to extend a helping hand to the Gaza Strip. The recent Israeli aggression against the freedom flotilla is evidence of Israel's discriminatory and widely denounced approach to the values of humanitarian relief, which bring together humankind, regardless of religion, race, culture or civilization. We call for a guarantee that such denounced acts of aggression will not be repeated.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): My thanks go to you, Madam President, for convening this very important meeting. I would like thank Lynn Pascoe for his valuable insights. But unfortunately, what we are looking for — something new to work with — has not been forthcoming.

At the outset I would like to associate myself with the statements made by my friend the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Syria on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The situation in the Middle East is as old as the United Nations. It has been debated in the Security Council for many years, and we have passed countless resolutions and presidential statements calling for a settlement. Even today that settlement eludes us, and unfortunately, the plight of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories under conflict and violence remains.

We are now in the seventh decade of our collective failure to enforce peace in the Middle East. I call for collective action to facilitate a long-term political settlement, which must create a viable Palestinian State. We may prioritize this action into two areas.

First, we must unequivocally call upon Israel to end what most here consider a repressive policy of occupying forces — repressive because those forces have converted the Palestinian land into a maze, a myriad of checkpoints, road blocks, military siege and separation walls. It has started to look more like a *Times* crossword puzzle.

The Middle East Quartet statement of 21 June 2010 has called the next important aspect, the blockade of Gaza, "unsustainable, unacceptable and not in the interest of any of those concerned". Now that is a key point. We are thinking from both sides. The recent measures by Israel to ease the blockade of Gaza are what are unfortunately categorized as a little too late

and far too little to work with. The outside world and the freedom-loving people of the world find this unacceptable.

The situation in occupied Jerusalem is not much different. Illegal separation walls, settlements and checkpoints even here block the integrity and unity of this age-old city — a city where, I may add, the Muslim Turkish sultans, when acting for the Muslim world, invited the much troubled Spanish diaspora of the Jewish nation to return and take a seat on the council of Jerusalem so that they could participate in the working of Jerusalem. That remains something outside the purview of the recent and current Muslim minority of that city.

Second in priorities is the requirement to stem the continuation of settlement activity. It is not only considered contrary to international law; it also a departure from the pledges made by Israel from time to time on the issue. This settlement activity is seen by much of the international community as a way and means for a major provocation. Settlement activity of recent times has accrued numerous patterns, the most worrying of which is the trend around East Jerusalem, where the status of centuries-old prayer places, mosques, churches and cemeteries of the Palestinian people is being altered in the name of excavation and creating new housing space.

I would say proudly here that when the last Jew left my city of Karachi in Pakistan and sold the synagogue for a condominium, a lot of us got together to stand and protect, until today, the Jewish cemetery in Karachi and ensure that none of it is ever violated. Nobody asked us to do that, but we feel a commitment to do it.

Only last Tuesday, Israel destroyed at least six Palestinian buildings in East Jerusalem. That is violence, and it continues with encouragement to some of the more enthusiastic settlers, who continue many forms of offense without any check or culpability. The recent self-imposed hiatus in settlement activity, which was never observed by Israel itself, is ending in September. That is hardly helping the cause of peace in the region. In itself the threat of settlements continues to cast a shadow on any meaningful peace process.

The plight of Palestinian people must end. The world cannot be a bystander to their miseries. Many international experts of the region have noted that the constituency for peace among the Palestinian population is constantly shrinking. It is being pointed out that more and more Palestinians see little justification in pursuing unequal peace with an unequal partner.

The present Israeli policies of blockades, separations and checkpoints can lead to the imprisonment of the entire Palestinian population as and when that may be deemed necessary. That continues to kill the peace process, as peace cannot be achieved between a prison guard and a prisoner. Israel must seize the fleeting opportunity for peace and convert the ongoing proximity talks into direct and meaningful negotiations with the aim of reaching a two-State solution.

I will take this opportunity to express concern at the lack of credible independent investigations of the Israeli aggression against the freedom flotilla in international waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Those people had embarked upon a noble mission, and, beyond all that has been said, that flotilla could have been escorted into an area where it could have disembarked peacefully and peacefully given up the goods that had been brought on board. We have no doubt of the humanitarian nature of that convoy, and to cast aspersions on its noble intentions is misleading.

I believe that the Turkish people, who were most of those affected, have been friends to Israel in the Muslim world and have worked hard to try to break this impossible impasse. For them to suffer such a consequence is, in my mind, unfortunate and, to say the least, not in the interest of friends who try to help.

It is a very simple thing: power knows no limitation. Normally, in the law of the jungle, when an elephant prevails and becomes overpowering and becomes an absolute killer, it is called a rogue elephant. No matter what one call it, the jungle moves away from it. Nature is divided; nature cannot bring together its forces of peace, harmony and existence. That is what is essential to understand — that power by itself must not be the goal of all means possible. In a civilized world it must be expressed in a way that is beneficial and not destructive.

I conclude by reiterating Pakistan's support for a lasting peace for the Arabs, Israelis and all the inhabitants of the region. We have a strong commitment to the realization of an independent, promised sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living in peace with

all its neigbours. We hope that, despite its reputation, this Council will bring us nearer to that objective.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tajikistan.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the group of members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The thirty-seventh session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 18 to 20 May 2010, once again stressed that the situation in the Middle East will remain tense as long as Israel persists with its illegal policies and practices and hinders the peace efforts, and until a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of all aspects of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict is achieved. Such a settlement will be achieved only by ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, and by enabling the Palestinian people to establish their independent, sovereign and viable State based on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital. In that regard, the OIC again calls on the international community, including the Security Council, to intensify its efforts to accelerate the Middle East peace process based on its responsibilities under the Charter.

While we meet to address issues related to the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, including Israel's attack on the freedom flotilla and its blockade of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Israel is undertaking other illegal and provocative actions in the holy city of Jerusalem. These actions include the recent Israeli decision to build new settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and to demolish Palestinian homes in several neighbourhoods in order to alter the character, status and demographic composition of the city.

In addition to Israel's illegal colonial settlement activities, construction of the separation wall and demolition of Palestinian homes, it has revoked the residency rights of Palestinian Jerusalemites, including four elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council in order to deport them from Jerusalem. Moreover, Israel is continuing its illegal activities in the occupied West Bank, including imposing restrictions on the movement of persons and goods through numerous checkpoints, carrying out military incursions and illegally arresting Palestinians. Illegal Israeli settlers also continue to carry out provocations against the peaceful Palestinian population. These actions are illegal, discriminatory and provocative, and constitute flagrant violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

The international community, including the Security Council, should act immediately and effectively to compel Israel to cease its illegal actions in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in East Jerusalem.

The illegal and inhuman blockade imposed by Israel, the occupying Power, on the Gaza Strip for more than three years constitutes collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population, violates international law and qualifies as a crime against humanity. More than 1.5 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip under the blockade continue to suffer from a scarcity of food, electricity, medicine and construction materials. They await the day when the international community will take prompt action to end their tragedy and suffering by compelling Israel to immediately and fully lift the blockade and open all border crossings to allow for the free movement of persons and goods to and from the Gaza Strip.

In response to the unjust Israeli blockade, the international flotilla of civilian activists set sail for Gaza to deliver humanitarian supplies and to break the blockade. However, Israel, with disregard for human rights and innocent lives, carried out a military attack in international waters against the peaceful international convoy, killing and injuring innocent, unarmed international peace activists.

As Council members realize, tinkering at the margins of the ongoing crisis in the Gaza Strip is not enough. The time has come to end the plight of more than 1.5 million Palestinians, lift the blockade and enable the people to live with dignity. Undoubtedly, the military attack on the freedom flotilla demands a prompt, full, impartial, transparent, independent and credible investigation conforming to international standards, based on the Security Council's presidential statement of 1 June (S/PRST/2010/9) and the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 2 June.

The OIC is deeply concerned by Israel's ongoing air and land violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, in breach of resolution 1701 (2006), and calls on Israel to withdraw fully from the remaining occupied Lebanese

land in the Shab'a farms, the Kfar Shuba hills and the northern part of Al-Ghajar village.

The OIC also supports the position of the international community reaffirming that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan or its institutional structures, as well as Israeli measures to impose its jurisdiction and administration there, are null and void and have no international legal effect. The OIC demands that Israel abide fully and immediately by resolution 497 (1981) and fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The OIC group reiterates that peace in the Middle East will be achieved only by ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories that began in 1967 and by establishing the independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, and by achieving a just solution to the plight of the Palestinian refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

It is incumbent upon the international community, particularly the Security Council, to shoulder its legal and moral responsibilities and take prompt and decisive actions and measures to implement relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. We must confront the challenges to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset I wish to thank you, Madam, for having convened this open debate on the situation in the Middle East. The issue under discussion is of paramount importance, and this meeting is all the more important in the light of recent negative developments at the regional level. Those developments have again highlighted persistent practices to deny the Palestinian people the exercise of their rights to self-determination and to live free from the fear of the occupation and tragic suffering resulting from the ongoing siege of Gaza and the West Bank and the recent attack on the humanitarian flotilla of ships bound for Gaza.

The flotilla attack happened at a time when our memories were still fresh of the crimes and atrocities committed by the Israeli regime in its all-out attack against the people of Gaza in Operation Cast Lead, during which thousands of besieged innocent Palestinians, including women and children, lost their lives or were injured, and civilian infrastructure and facilities were willfully and systematically targeted. According to various reliable sources, in the course of that operation the Israeli army did not hesitate to use internationally prohibited and restricted weapons against civilian targets. Since then, the Israeli regime has continued to defy the will of the international community, while its inhuman policy of continued blockade against the Palestinians has caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48) was an important step forward towards remedying the violations of the Israeli regime in Gaza. The report, when issued, brought hope of swift action by the relevant bodies of the United Nations, including this Council, to put an end to the culture of impunity for Israeli war crimes. So far, this hope has not been realized. If criminals were brought to justice, perhaps the barbaric attack on the humanitarian convoy would not have happened. Impunity for perpetrators of grave crimes, including war crime, occupation and crimes against humanity, is in itself a cause of and incentive for further atrocities.

It is regrettable to witness that the inaction or weak reaction of relevant responsible United Nations organs in dealing with the Israeli regime's illegal policies and practices have emboldened that dangerous regime to continue with its crimes and cruelty against the defenceless Palestinian people, especially innocent women and children. The blatant support of certain Powers for the Israeli regime is one of the bitterest realities of our world today. By blocking any single action against the inhumane policies and acts of the Israeli regime in this Council and using various tactics to undermine efforts in other United Nations bodies to hold it accountable, these criminals enjoy a merciless impunity in violating the internationally recognized human rights and humanitarian law.

Despite strong international condemnation, illegal settlements are being expanded much faster than in the past, and one tangible consequence is that the land of the Palestinians is shrinking and more and more Palestinian houses are being demolished, to be replaced by illegal settlements. This Monday alone, the

Israel regime, in defiance of global calls for halting the destruction of Palestinian shelters, levelled tents used by Palestinians as their homes in the northern West Bank. Israeli soldiers entered Al-Farisiya village and ordered the residents away before knocking structures down. The occupying forces also knocked down nine agricultural structures on the pretext that they had been put up without permits. The resumption of demolition work came as the international community strongly called for an end to the Israeli demolitions, describing them as illegal under international law.

We believe that the fundamental problem of this long-standing crisis is not in the lack of peace plans, which have arisen from time to time, one after the other, but is rooted in the continuation of the illegitimate occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and in the Israeli regime's intransigence to any single principle of international law. All these plans were doomed to failure because they all failed in one way or another to tackle the Palestinian problem at its root causes, including the occupation itself. Furthermore, the Israeli regime, since its unblessed inception, has attempted to cite external elements as factors in its failure to move to advance the so-called peace processes. These failed attempts have been manifestly aimed at diverting attention from the principled causes of the crisis and at evading responsibility for the crimes committed in Palestine.

In line with this policy, Israeli officials, instead of answering to world public opinion for their unparalleled record of non-compliance with all humanitarian and human rights principles and their long and dark history of crimes and atrocities, including occupation, aggression, militarism, State terrorism and crimes against humanity, have always made inflammatory remarks and baseless allegations against other countries. Now, it is widely recognized that the Israeli regime's clandestine development and unlawful possession of large stock of nuclear warheads and its constant threats to use them against certain countries pose a uniquely grave threat to regional and international peace and security.

The Israeli regime has persisted in its aggressive and expansionist policies towards Lebanon by constantly violating the latter's land, sea and air space and refusing to withdraw from Lebanese occupied land in the Shaba'a, the Kfar Shuba Hills and the northern part of Al-Ghajar village. It also continues its occupation of the occupied Syrian Golan. That regime should immediately and fully withdraw from these occupied territories in compliance with the most basic principles of international law and the United Nation Charter.

Attaining a peaceful and just settlement of the question of Palestine is imperative to the realization of a comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East and beyond. In our view, a lasting peace in Palestine and the region will be possible only through justice and an end to discrimination and to the illegal occupation of Palestinian and other Arab occupied territories. Today, we need to act collectively to demonstrate our all-out support for the cause of Palestine and to rally to the assistance of those who have been deprived of their rights. Let us hope that oppression and occupation will end and that justice and freedom prevail in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Before concluding, I would like to react to the reference made to my country by the representative of the Israeli regime. I would like to place on record once again that my delegation rejects the baseless allegations and distortions made in this Chamber that have been repeated so frequently that they have become a practice by the Israeli regime to distract the attention of the international community from its nuclear arsenal and its criminal policies and abhorrent atrocities in the region, including its recent heinous crimes against the people of Palestine in Gaza and against freedom-loving people in international waters near Gaza.

The President: I call on the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Benitez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to express the Cuban delegation's satisfaction at seeing you, Madam, preside over the Security Council and to commend you for the manner in which and your team have led the work of this organ this month.

I also affirm Cuba's full support for the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The situation in the Middle East remains complex and characterized by continued instability and insecurity. The ongoing illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories remains the principal obstacle to a just and lasting peace in the region.

The international community cannot stand idly by in the face of the untenable situation in the Gaza Strip. The imposition by Israel of road blocks and restrictions on the freedom of movement and on access of persons and goods, including humanitarian and medical supplies, have made the recovery and reconstruction of the area virtually impossible and have compounded even further the already precarious standard of living of the population.

Cuba reiterates its demand that Israel immediately, fully and unconditionally lift the cruel and illegal blockade of Gaza in order to allow for the free movement of supplies as well as permanent humanitarian access.

Cuba condemns the criminal attack perpetrated by the special forces of Israel in the early hours of 31 ay against a flotilla of boats in international waters, delivering humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people living in the Gaza Strip, causing the death and injury of a number of members of that flotilla. Likewise, Cuba supports the request of the Human Rights Council for the immediate carrying out, under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, of a full, impartial, credible, transparent and independent international investigation into the Israeli attack on the humanitarian maritime convoy.

Israel cannot be allowed to continue to commit grave and flagrant violations of international law with impunity. The international community, including the Security Council, must demand that Israel comply with its international obligations.

Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories, even after the partial and temporary moratorium announced in November 2009 have continued unabated. At present, more than 3,700 dwellings are being built, and more than 200 Palestinian dwellings have been demolished in order for those illegal activities to proceed.

Cuba expresses its profound concern at that continuing Israeli demolition of Palestinian dwellings and eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, as well as other illegal acts of incitement, provocation and aggression carried out by extremist settlers against the Palestinian population and the Holy Sites. That now makes the situation very volatile and dangerous. The enormous physical, economic and social devastation caused by those illegal and destructive settlement practices profoundly impairs the peace process and may jeopardize the outcome for an agreement on the final status of Jerusalem.

Such measures and policies undertaken by Israel constitute grave and flagrant violations of international law, of the United Nations Charter, of many United Nations resolutions, including Council resolution 497 (1981), of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004.

The Security Council must urgently act in response to those dangerous illegal measures taken by Israel, which are geared to hindering and negating peace initiatives in order to continue to consolidate its illegitimate occupation of Palestinian territory and de facto to annex more Palestinian territories.

I wish to conclude by restating once more Cuba's position in support of a just and lasting peace for all the peoples of the Middle East, one that puts an end to the occupation of all Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and that guarantees the exercise of the self-determination of the Palestinian people through the establishment of the independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): Madam President, let me first congratulate you on your country's presidency of the Council. I also wish to align my delegation with the statements by Egypt and Tajikistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively.

Israel's attack on the humanitarian freedom flotilla and its razing of Palestinian houses in Jerusalem are merely the latest examples in an ever-expanding list of aggressive and illegal behaviour towards the people of Palestine, and towards those who wish to aid them. The world continues to be outraged, but is unable to act.

In many parts of the world, inaction by the United Nations — exemplified by the mild presidential statement adopted by the Security Council on 1 June (S/PRST/2010/9) — has sharpened the perception that there are two sets of standards, one for Israel and another for the rest of the world. That perception has strengthened the feeling of helplessness of many people in all parts of the world, leaving them open to attempts to radicalize them. It has also given rise to the

feeling that the United Nations is unable to defend the rights of the most marginalized, those who most require it.

It is therefore critical for the United Nations to take all necessary steps to restore its credibility. Of immediate importance is the speedy establishment of a United Nations-led investigation pursuant to the presidential statement. While we continue to support the Secretary-General's efforts in this regard, we are disconcerted that 52 days after the adoption of the presidential statement, the United Nations-led investigation still exists in the shadows. For example, it is still uncertain what the terms of reference of the investigation are.

In the meantime, Israel's military investigation has concluded. As expected, Israel has exonerated itself. As expected, they have employed the usual tactic of changing the facts on the ground, hoping that the results of that illegitimate investigation into an illegal act will be the basis of a future United Nations-led investigation. As expected, they have taken token ameliorative action, such as to ease the blockade against Gaza, hoping that the world will forget their actions.

But the world will not forget. On Malaysia's part, the Prime Minister has written to the President of the General Assembly requesting the re-convening of the tenth emergency special session. The Malaysian parliament has also adopted a motion that contains the same idea. This idea is consistent with the position adopted by the foreign ministers of the Arab League at their meeting on 2 July.

Some may say that we should be patient and prudent. We believe that patience is not inexhaustible and that it is imprudent to continue waiting for a train that is unlikely to come.

In addition, we believe that the emergency special session could also focus on the causes of the situation, of which the flotilla incident is merely a symptom, namely, the blockade of Gaza and the lack of progress towards a comprehensive settlement of the Middle Eastern problem. The blockade imposed by Israel on Gaza is a form of collective punishment forbidden by international law. It is immoral and illegal and has forced 1.5 million Gazans to live in abject conditions. We urge Israel to completely lift that inhumane blockade by opening the borders rather than to merely allow consumer goods in.

The emergency special session would also be a means of ensuring that Israel would be held accountable for its intransigence.

It is also increasingly alarming that the intransigence of Israel goes beyond the expansion of settlements. The following are some of the unlawful acts committed by Israel that further illuminate Israel's malicious intent to entrench its grip on Palestinian lands, which it has illegally occupied since 1967. The first is the construction of the separation wall, which snakes into Palestinian territory, thus annexing more Palestinian lands illegally. The second is the eviction of Palestinian families and demolition of Palestinian homes. The third is the Israeli military order on infiltration that went into effect in April this year, which authorizes the Israeli occupying forces to deport at least 25,000 Palestinian and Gazans residing in the West Bank.

These actions clearly violate numerous United Nations resolutions and international law and will make it more difficult to reach a final agreement on the basis of a two-State solution. Hence, the international community, including the Security Council, must hold Israel accountable for its illegal actions and put an end to this occupation.

Resolving these issues requires the international community to focus all its energy and efforts on restoring comprehensive peace in the region and the inalienable rights and dignity of the Palestinian people. That requires, among other things, the political will of the Council to bring into effect the Council's own resolutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nicaragua.

Mr. Rosales Díaz (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on your leadership in the presidency of the Council and to thank you for having convened this debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. Allow me also to express my thanks to Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing to the Council this morning.

Nicaragua, as a member of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, fully associates itself with what was stated by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt in his capacity as Chairperson of the Movement.

Once again, Nicaragua reiterates its deepest condemnation of Israel's illegal occupation of all Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories and demands its immediate withdrawal. We condemn the Israeli policies and practices of building and not dismantling settlements. We condemn the inhumane blockade of Gaza and the policy of fragmentation of the West Bank and other Palestinian territories.

On 31 May 2010, the world was astonished to witness the cold-blooded, premeditated murder of nine unarmed civilian activists at the hands of the Israeli State's military forces, who, like terrorists, boarded vessels in international waters. More than 40 people were wounded, some so seriously that the death toll could still rise.

The Government and people of Nicaragua stand in solidarity with the families of the victims and join their voices to the call for justice without delay. We take this opportunity to express once again our solidarity with the people and Government of Turkey. We also call upon the other Governments whose citizens were among the victims to demand that justice be done.

With its customary impunity, the State of Israel has refused an international investigation and has described the murders of these individuals as self defence. Can it be that the illegal boarding of a humanitarian flotilla in international waters could be deemed an act of legitimate defence? As if it were not enough to attack a humanitarian flotilla in international waters, the Israeli soldiers displayed the most barbarous violence and were not content to merely neutralize their victims, instead riddling them with bullets. As proof, if it was necessary, the Government of Turkey revealed the content of the forensic reports and pictures of some of their citizens who were killed at point-blank range and others who suffered multiple bullet wounds, five of which were head wounds.

Fifty-one days have gone by since that attack. The Human Rights Council approved a resolution to undertake an independent international investigation, and the Security Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2010/9). However, Israel remains unpunished.

Nicaragua asks that, first, the Council demand the State of Israel to immediately lift the blockade on Gaza; secondly, an international investigative commission be established under United Nations auspices; thirdly, the State of Israel be required to provide full cooperation with such a commission as well as with the commission established by the Human Rights Council; and fourthly, those who masterminded the crimes and those who carried them out be brought to justice and punished.

These are but the minimal measures required to ensure legal security and justice. While lip service has certainly been paid to such measures over recent decades of violent Israeli occupation, they must now take precedence as soon as possible. Nicaragua hopes that such measures will bring a degree of peace to the families of the victims and give meaning to the idea of justice.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Ms. Grau (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland is encouraged by the measures announced by Israel to ease the blockade against the Gaza Strip, as well as similar measures taken by Egypt. Those measures are a first step towards a predictable, lasting opening of crossing points between the Gaza Strip and the outside world for the passage of goods and persons, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009).

Gaza's social fabric and economy have been severely damaged by the hostilities and by the blockade, to the particular detriment of the civilian population. The objective we must all pursue must be allowing the civilian population of Gaza to lead a normal life. The revitalization of the private sector and the resumption of exchanges between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are imperatives.

My country already raised the urgency of this question in the open debate held in July 2009 (*see S/PV.6171 (Resumption 1)*) and has in the meantime drafted the outlines of a mechanism to allow sustainable, predictable and regular access to Gaza while respecting the security needs of Israel. Switzerland therefore welcomes the efforts of Council members towards improving the situation and reiterates its readiness to support such efforts.

Switzerland notes the continued violations of international law by all parties to the conflict. The recent announcements of the resumption of construction activities in the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are cause for serious concern. Those settlements have been established in

violation of international humanitarian law. Switzerland calls upon Israel to renew the freeze on construction activities in the West Bank and to extend it to East Jerusalem for an indefinite period of time.

My country also calls upon the Israeli authorities to rescind the expulsion orders for the East Jerusalem parliamentarians, which are contrary to human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Switzerland wishes also to denounce arbitrary detentions and intimidation of political opponents in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. We call on the authorities to respect the rule of law and civil liberties and to continue the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process. This is necessary for the establishment of a Palestinian State serving the entire population and for the negotiation of a lasting settlement of the conflict with Israel. That conflict must come to an end: it is not only the security of Israel and of the Palestinians that is at stake, but also the credibility of the international security system.

The Clinton parameters, the Taba talks and the Geneva initiative are some of the promising efforts that indicate the outlines of a lasting solution. The State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have reaffirmed on many occasions that their goal is the birth of a Palestinian State. Hamas too has declared its acceptance of the 1967 borders. Switzerland counts on the support of Security Council members to ensure that those declarations are treated with seriousness. The Council should display continued determination to overcome the obstacles which, to date, have prevented this vision from becoming a reality.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): Let me begin by thanking you, Madam President, for scheduling this very important open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I would also like to convey our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his insightful and comprehensive briefing this morning. I further thank Mr. Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his statement.

I also wish to state that the Bangladesh delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Egypt and Tajikistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively. In addition, I wish to briefly make certain points that Bangladesh believes to be of importance.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, has always been a major concern for the international community and for the United Nations. A durable and sustainable resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the issue of Palestine, which is the core of that long-lasting crisis, must therefore be our collective strategic objective. All Member States should pledge complete commitment to that objective and throw their full moral, diplomatic, political and economic support behind its early realization. Bangladesh is ready to play a constructive role in this collective endeavour to achieve a just, lasting and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on the two-State principle. Bangladesh unites with the international community in reaffirming its full support for the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle for self-determination and freedom from continued occupation, and it reiterates its long-standing position that the continued occupation of Palestine is the root cause of violence, unrest and destabilization in the region.

The people of Palestine are being denied their fundamental right to self-determination and to live freely in their own land, and displaced Palestinians have been denied their right to return home and live with dignity and safety. Unfortunately, it appears to be a collective failure on the part of the international community that their fundamental rights to self-determination and to a sovereign State have remained unrealized. It is also unfortunate that Israel, whose people had the experience of suffering and deprivation in the past, instead of avoiding those ugly practices, has continued to violate international humanitarian law by committing systematic human rights violations and imposing deprivation against the Palestinian people.

For example, less than two months back the Freedom Flotilla, a convoy of ships transporting humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people under Israeli blockade in Gaza, was intercepted. Our thanks go to Israel, as it partially lifted some sanctions. However, a full and unconditional lifting of the sanctions on Gaza is a legitimate expectation of the global community and would be a step towards creating an environment of goodwill and trust among the neighbouring peoples of

Palestine and Israel. That is essential for a lasting peace in the region.

General Assembly and the Security Council, in their resolutions adopted over the years, have reconfirmed the occupying Power's obligation to ensure the basic human rights of the Palestinian people. My delegation believes that only full and sincere implementation of the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions can resolve the Palestinian crisis.

In conclusion, in order to achieve a lasting solution in the Middle East, it is very important to address the key issue, which is the prolonged and illegal occupation of Arab territories by Israel. The people of Palestine have been under illegal occupation over the past six decades. This occupation is extremely costly for the taxpayers of Israel and also for Israel's friends and neighbours in terms of resources, human lives and peace and stability. The solution, therefore, requires Israel's complete and unconditional withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and all other occupied Arab lands.

Let me reiterate Bangladesh's full support for a lasting peace for all inhabitants of the region, both Arabs and Israelis, and our strong commitment to the realization of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side and in peace with all its neighbours.

Finally, my delegation believes that the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant resolutions are the best guides for achieving a two-State solution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Keegel (Sri Lanka): Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Madam, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Lynn Pascoe, for his briefing this morning. My delegation appreciates the opportunity given to us to once again to address the situation in the Middle East, particularly, the Palestinian question.

My delegation believes that a resolution of the Palestinian issue is crucial for restoring peace in the entire Middle East and would have implications elsewhere. My delegation has consistently supported a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue and has called on all sides to fully implement the resolutions adopted by the Council and the General Assembly regarding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the realization of the two-State solution.

We remain deeply concerned about the widespread suffering and hardship the Palestinian people continue to endure due to the economic blockade and about the ensuing grave situation in the occupied territories. While we note the relaxation of some restrictions by the Israeli Government, we call for the removal of all restrictions. Further relaxations could enhance the confidence level of all concerned and facilitate efforts to bring peace to the region. The Palestinian people have suffered for too long and continue to live under occupation. The denial of their fundamental right to statehood, recognized by the United Nations, due to the continued Israeli occupation has seriously affected progress on socio-economic indicators for the population in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

In that context, my delegation reiterates its long-held position that for peace to be viable and sustainable in the Palestinian territory, the occupying forces must withdraw to the 1967 borders and must end the economic blockade. We support a complete stop to the illegal expansion settlements. Changing the demographic character of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, would only increase tensions and animosities in the entire Middle East region.

The Palestinian Authority needs to continue the implementation of its security plan and make every effort within its abilities to improve law and order and to ensure its territory is not used for illegal attacks on Israel. Allegations of illegal arms flows must be investigated. Both sides must do everything possible to ensure the safety and security of civilians.

Sri Lanka reiterates its support for the Palestinian National Authority under the leadership of President Abbas. We stress the need to preserve and protect the national and democratic institutions that are vital to a future independent Palestinian State. We therefore urge the Palestinian groups to act speedily to reconcile and reunite within the framework of the Palestinian National Authority. Unity among the Palestinian people is its strength.

My delegation supports international efforts for the early resumption of direct negotiations, and believes that the unity of the Palestinian people is essential to this endeavour. We also remain concerned by the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, including the plight of Syrian detainees. We call for the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions.

My delegation reiterates its support for a lasting peace in the Middle East, including an early settlement of the Palestinian issue.

The President: I call on the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome this open debate on the Middle East and the Palestine question. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Our delegation expresses its deep concern at the humanitarian crisis and the deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territory. The brutal and systematic aggression of the occupying Power, Israel, against the Palestinian people will make their development and self-determination impossible and hinders efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East.

The repeated violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people by the forces of the occupying Power through the excessive use of force, collective punishment, the confiscation of land and the establishment and expansion of illegal settlements are flagrant violations of international law, including international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions.

Operation Cast Lead and the criminal attack perpetrated by Israeli military forces in international waters against the freedom flotilla en route to Gaza have been condemned by the Human Rights Council in various resolutions. On 29 June 2010, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, condemned the expansionist plans of the State of Israel in Jerusalem, including the plan put forward by the Mayor of that city to demolish dozens of buildings that are home to hundreds of Palestinian families. The Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, expressed his concern at the decision of Israel to demolish more Palestinian homes and expand the settlements of Pisgat Ze'ev.

The political and military elite of the occupying Power is promoting all kinds of illegal activities in the aim of changing the geographic nature and the demographic composition of the Palestine territory, including the urban character and Arab and Islamic identity of East Jerusalem. These carefully planned activities constitute flagrant violations of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela condemns the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and calls for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops. My Government also rejects the construction of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, which is intended to fragment the unity, integrity and territorial contiguity of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. As is well known, in an advisory opinion the International Court of Justice declared this measure to be illegal.

In its presidential statement of 1 June (S/PRST/2010/9), the Security Council took note of the call of the Secretary-General for a "prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards" into this reprehensible incident. One month and 20 days have passed since then. It is a matter of concern that the panel to carry out this investigation has not yet been established.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as a State Member of the United Nations, expects the investigation to be genuinely impartial, credible and transparent and conforming to international standards, in contrast to the sham investigation that was carried out by the State of Israel to cover up the proof of its reprehensible crime.

The situation of the Palestine population in the Gaza Strip is a humanitarian catastrophe. As a consequence of the Israeli aggression known as Operation Cast Lead and the blockade of the Gaza Strip, 85 per cent of the population depends on humanitarian aid.

Preventing by force, as Israel is doing, the realization of cooperation in solidarity with the Palestinian people is an act of an unquestionable criminality. Venezuela demands once again an immediate and unconditional end to the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and the opening of all the

border crossings, thus allowing for the freedom of movement of goods and people and access for humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has said that "the long-running closure imposed on the Gaza Strip is counterproductive, unsustainable and wrong. It punishes innocent civilians. It must be lifted by the Israeli authorities immediately". Why does the Security Council, which is mandated to address matters related to international peace and security, not adopt concrete and credible measures to bring to an end this genocidal blockade repudiated by all the peoples of the world?

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms it full support for the creation of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within internationally recognized borders that guarantee the full exercise of the right of this heroic people to self-determination. This is an indispensable element for achieving peace and stability in the Middle East.

Israel's possession of nuclear weapons is a threat to international peace and security, in particular for the Middle East region. Its militaristic policies continue to ignore the repeated calls of the international community for Israel to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to open its facilities to the international Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system.

In this context, Venezuela supports the decision adopted at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons recently held in New York, which resolved to call for an international conference on the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East on 2012 in order to ban the development, possession and utilization of these weapons in the region.

The failure of the Israeli Government to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly must be addressed by this Council, including through the possible adoption of sanctions to persuade the Israeli political and military elite of their obligations to comply with the rules and principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments in order to achieve a solid and lasting peace in the Middle East. The State of Israel repeatedly violates the Charter of the United Nations and refutes through its actions the very nature of this Organization.

If the Security Council wishes to preserve its legitimacy as guarantor of peace and international security, it should adopt the measures necessary to achieve the end of the systematic slaughter of the Palestinian people by the State of Israel.

In conclusion, I wish to affirm that Venezuela supports the request made by the Prime Minister of Malaysia for the convening of an emergency special session of the General Assembly to consider the issues under debate in the Security Council.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, acting head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Serrano: I thank you, Madam for giving the floor to the European Union. The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; as well as the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

Since our last open debate in April on this issue (see S/PV.6298), two major developments have occurred: the Gaza flotilla events of 31 May and the beginning of proximity talks in early May. The Israeli military operation in the morning hours of 31 May in international waters against a flotilla sailing to Gaza resulted in the loss of nine lives and directed international attention to the unsustainable situation in Gaza. The European Union called for an immediate, full and impartial inquiry into these events, which should include credible international participation. Furthermore, the European Union declared its readiness to contribute to the implementation of a mechanism that would allow for full and regular access to Gaza based on a list of prohibited goods. The European Union High Representative discussed this matter with the Israeli and Palestinian leadership during her visit to the region last weekend and will present options to the European Union Foreign Affairs Council next Monday.

The European Union has welcomed the Israeli Government's recent announcement, which is a significant step forward in the review of Israel's policy on Gaza. The implementation of commitments undertaken will be key. The European Union is ready to help in the opening of the crossings, but has expectations linked to volumes, exports, the movement

of persons and security. These expectations are, of course, applicable to all existing crossings.

The objective remains the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), as well as the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, leading to the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of Gaza crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons. Israel's legitimate security concerns should also be addressed and Gilad Shalit must be released without delay and without conditions.

The launch of proximity talks between Israelis and Palestinians was welcomed by the European Union and its Quartet partners. We called on the parties to pursue them in good faith. These talks are a significant step towards the resumption of direct bilateral negotiations. The European Union supports the continued efforts of Senator Mitchell in this regard.

The overall aim of negotiations between the Parties is — within 24 months, as set out by the Quartet in March — a settlement that results in the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. A comprehensive peace, which is a fundamental interest of the parties in the region and the whole international community, must be achieved on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Road Map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative.

It is the view of the European Union that substantive discussion of all final status issues should commence as soon as possible. The implementation in the coming weeks of confidence-building measures on the ground would help in reaching this goal. The European Union calls on all parties to refrain from all provocative actions.

The European Union remains deeply concerned about the situation in East Jerusalem. Recent settlement activity, house demolitions, evictions and deportations underline the need to resolve through negotiations the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States. We particularly deplore the recent house demolitions in East Jerusalem, which do not contribute to the establishment of an atmosphere of confidence, which is crucial at this stage of the negotiation process.

The European Union commends all initiatives that contribute to improve the well-being of the Palestinian population, especially in Gaza, such as the recent summer games held by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza. High Representative Ashton visited a summer camp on her recent visit to Gaza. This initiative can count on the continued political and financial support of the European Union and its member States. It serves as a much needed counterbalance to the backdrop of violence and poverty, and it provides Gazan children with recreational and educational opportunities. The European Union strongly condemns the recent attacks on UNRWA's summer camps.

The European Union expresses the hope that both parties to this conflict will engage in substantive discussion of final status issues so that, before the end of the current session of the General Assembly, we can take note of urgently needed progress towards peace and stability for the people of the Middle East.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): I should like first to congratulate you, Madam, on having assumed the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July, and also to express my appreciation to you and the other members of the Security Council for this opportunity to address this Chamber on a matter that is of grave importance to all of us — the peace, security and stability of the Middle East.

The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered this morning by the representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Align Movement, but at the same time wishes to stress certain points.

The Philippines position regarding the situation in the Middle East, specifically the Palestinian question, remains clear and consistent. The Philippines has always supported the establishment of a free and independent Palestinian State, and the Philippines has for many years joined in the global clamour for the establishment of a Palestinian homeland. In this regard, the Philippines sees merit in the two-State solution proposed by our partners for peace, and hopes that both Israel and Palestine will join hands together to achieve a long-lasting and durable solution to the problem.

The Philippines is sensitive to the legitimate security concerns of the State of Israel and the right of its people to live free from fear and free from harm. Indeed, the Philippines shares Israel's deep concern for its safety and its existence as a State. But as we have witnessed repeatedly, force only begets force.

The Philippines joins the Non-Aligned Movement and other partners in calling for the full and immediate lifting of the blockade leveled against Gaza to enable, to the extent possible, the free entry of food, medical supplies and other daily necessities. The Philippines believes that the continued existence of this blockade only succeeds in alienating and punishing the innocent Palestinians. Moreover, the residents of Gaza must also be allowed to move freely and to travel to their place of work or employment outside of Gaza without hindrance or harassment. We cannot turn a blind eye to the suffering of innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza, particularly women and children, who suffer the most in this conflict. The United Nations therefore bears the inescapable responsibility to take the steps necessary to alleviate the pain and suffering of the Palestinian people.

The Philippines urges Israel and Palestine to re-establish their proximity talks and negotiations. It is a tortuous and fitful process, but it is the only viable course of action. The Philippines believes that only a diplomatic solution — that is, resumption of a sincere and meaningful dialogue between the two contending parties — can bring a just, comprehensive and enduring solution to this problem. The environment of conflict and anguish and the climate of fear should not be allowed to continue. Instead, both parties must promote a climate of trust and respect towards one another, as future neighbour States.

The Philippines strongly supports the role of the Madrid Quartet — the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations — the Arab Group, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement and even non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups in ensuring that the momentum for peace talks does not fizzle out.

From a much broader perspective, all countries in the Middle East must be encouraged to find the fortitude to explore uncharted avenues to durable peace in their part of the world. The 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), through follow-on action to the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, has opened a gateway through which other options could contribute towards a peaceful Middle East.

In conclusion, the Philippines applauds the Security Council for its full and continuous involvement in this issue. I wish to assure the Council and all of our partners in the United Nations that the Philippines stands ready to do its part to contribute to the building of a lasting peace in the region and to helping Israel and Palestine find a way forward towards peaceful and friendly coexistence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Pálsson (Iceland): The situation in the Middle East remains of grave concern and continues to threaten stability far beyond the region. My Government attaches great value to the proximity talks between Israelis and Palestinians and trusts that they will pave the way for the resumption of bilateral negotiations leading to the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State. We also welcome the steps that are being taken in the review of Israel's policy on Gaza and look forward to the full implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), leading to the unconditional opening of Gaza crossings for humanitarian aid, commerce and people.

At the same time, Iceland remains deeply concerned at the continued house demolitions, evictions, settlement activities and the building of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territories and fears that this may lead to the erosion of the two-State solution. Only last week, the Jerusalem municipality approved the construction of 32 Israeli homes in a settlement in East Jerusalem. This policy of continued settlement activity is obviously not going to increase confidence in the peace process and must be brought to an end.

Also, the policy of house demolitions should be ceased immediately. Last week, again, the Jerusalem municipality demolished a number of Palestinian structures throughout East Jerusalem, forcibly displacing at least 25 people, including 12 children. These and additional demolitions in the Jordan Valley this week bring recorded demolitions in the occupied Palestinian territories this year to a total of 198

structures, resulting in the forced displacement of almost 300 Palestinians, half of them children, while 600 others have been otherwise affected.

While recognizing Israel's legitimate security interests, Iceland strongly believes the blockade of Gaza to be in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains deplorable as a result of the blockade. We align ourselves with those who call upon the Government of Israel to immediately and fully lift the blockade so that the people in Gaza can regain their dignity and revive their economy.

Iceland has strongly condemned the action leading to the loss of lives on 31 May during the Israeli raid on a flotilla sailing to Gaza and supports calls for an immediate, full and impartial inquiry into the incident, with international participation.

In conclusion, Iceland remains a firm supporter of a peaceful resolution of the conflict and the two-State solution. This requires genuine political willingness by both parties to reach an agreement on all final status issues, including borders, refugees and Jerusalem. It has been said by some supporters of the two-State solution that we are currently at one minute to midnight. The urgency is clear, but what remains unclear is whether the parties, in conjunction with the international community, are ready to take the measures that are necessary. Let us hope that we can join forces and overcome the remaining hurdles before the fateful hour strikes.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Morejón (Ecuador) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank you, Madam President, for having convened this meeting to address the very important issue on the United Nations agenda. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing. Ecuador associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Government of Ecuador once again reaffirms its position on the Middle East conflict: there must be full compliance with the norms and principles of international law, in particular those relating to the peaceful settlement of disputes. The 1 June statement of the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2010/9) and resolution 14/1 adopted by the Human Rights Council on 2 June urge Israel to lift the blockade imposed on the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip, to open all Israeli border crossings so as to allow free movement of people and goods to and from the Gaza Strip, and to comply with the norms of international humanitarian law and with United Nations resolutions.

Ecuador is gravely concerned about Israel's systematic violation of those provisions, which simply blocks any rapprochement by the parties with a view to achieving a negotiated solution. Ecuador reiterates its determination to support all necessary efforts to prevent Israel from continuing to take illegal measures in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

It is the duty of the United Nations to take action towards a fair and satisfactory resolution of the Middle East problem. Here, the Security Council bears an inescapable responsibility to act. The States Members of the United Nations await such action, and now is the time to achieve positive results. We urge the parties to pave the way towards a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict on the basis of ongoing dialogue and fulfilment of their commitments under the Road Map. That would unquestionably lead to stability and peace in a region where the parties must coexist within agreed borders.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.